



Western Cape Early Childhood Development Community of Practice

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS 28 October 2020

Virtual Meeting



SETTING THE SCENE

The last time the Western Cape (WC) ECD CoP convened was in May 2020, during lockdown level 4. There was a series of these CoPs that were dedicated to supporting CoP members during this difficult time. A range of issues emerged around nutritional support where distribution of food parcels was an uncoordinated process as per the experience of many NGOs. The role of government was also unclear in this distribution process. The CoP members had also been grappling with the issue of reopening, with the need to understand fully how it would happen and more importantly when it would happen.

The CoP then convened again in October 2020 after dealing with a number of changes mainly, that the WC ECD CoP facilitator Carol Harrington from ELRU would no longer be playing the role of the facilitator anymore. BRIDGE is sincerely thankful for the time and effort that Carol has put into the WC ECD CoP. She brought her in-depth experience, networks and extensive knowledge of ECD into the CoPs and made them a worthwhile platform. BRIDGE is honoured as Carol remains a ECD CoP member and friend that will continue to contribute in whichever she can.

The CoP, held on 28 October was kick-started by Kauthar Conrad, the BRIDGE WC project manager, and she introduced Kayin Scholtz as the new facilitator of the CoP. Kayin has been involved in the CoPs in a coordination capacity a few years ago. He is the Resource Hub Manager at the DG Murray Trust (DGMT) and has previously worked for the mainly in the NPO sector supporting education interventions. He has helped to develop ECD Programmes with a resource and training organisation, and has helped to participate in establishing a productive ECD community through the Bridge network. In 2015 he was one of the Mail and Guardian's 200 young South Africans. BRIDGE is excited to work with Kayin and to welcome him back into the ECD CoP in the role of a facilitator. Kayin explained that there definitely was synergy between his role as the ECD hub manager and what BRIDGE does

WC ECD CoP members all had an opportunity to introduce themselves. The main focus of the day was the Department of Social Development (DSD) most recent directions issued by the Minister of Social Development on 11 September 2020, a showcase by True North on their ECD centre registration app and an update of the National ECD CoP that took place on the 20th October 2020.



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES-THE REALITY ON THE GROUND

The purpose of this topic was to present the CoP members what the recent directions were and what they most likely implied as far as the guidelines and procedures of reopening and running and ECD programme during this alert phase meant as prescribed by the Disaster Management Act. In addition, the CoP sought to take stock of how ECD programmes were handling issues of reopening and running programmes in line with the new directions. There were directions issued in July 2020 and now in September 2020, new directions had to be issued for a number of reasons including a court order that forced the DSD to lift certain directives that were complicating the reopening of ECD programmes.

Kayin made a [presentation](#) that was drawn from Van Wyk and Associate who were the lawyers that took the DSD to court. According to the presentation, the following changes implied by the directions were:

<p><i>Overall changes:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSD has withdrawn the previous directions of 10 July and issued new ones on 11 September 2020 • Therefore, the only directions promulgated by the department in terms of the Disaster Management Act Regulations are those of 11 September, 9 May and 2 July 2020 • Neither one of these which is pertinent to ECDs, other than the undertaking that the department will continue to pay subsidies, contained in the directions of 9 May 2020 • This means that the directions that virtually impact the ECD sector are those of the 11th September 20, in addition to the Children’s Act
<p><i>On the reopening process:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All that is required in terms of the Annexure A requiring conformation with safety measures is a confirmation that reasonable steps have been taken • There is no sanction imposed for a failure to take such reasonable steps • The SOPS do not seem to be on DSD’s website anymore. Even if an attempt were to be made to argue that they have legal force, without even the rudimentary ‘promulgation’ on a website, this argument cannot hold
<p><i>In terms of extra-mural activities:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra mural activities that operate within ECD

	<p>sites can continue to do so, however extra mural activities operating in ECD sites in schools and under DBE for an example would have to adhere to the particular department's directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There aren't any specific protocols on extra mural activities, the usual Department of Health and Department of Labour Directions issued under the Disaster Management Act apply • In the case that an extra-mural activity is considered part of an ECD programme then the 11 September directions would then apply •
<p><i>In terms of Visitors:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The updated directions do not have anything specific regarding visitors, however, having visitors could be challenging because of the screening but it would be possible to offer a school tour as an example, with the screening protocols in place
<p><i>In terms of Inspections:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'verification and monitoring' process described in the previous directions, does not appear in these directions. It was never lawful to be forced to wait for an inspection to open, and it still isn't. • You do not need to complete or submit a self-assessment form. All that is required is for you to sign a conformation in Annexure A.
<p><i>Annexure A: Declaration confirming compliance of an ECD programme or Partial Care Facility:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document requires a declaration of confirmation with: Health, safety and social distancing measures set out in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Directions issued by Minister of DSD ○ DSD SoPs and guidelines ○ Regulations made in terms of section 27 (2) of the Disaster Management Act
<p><i>Registration:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the things of concern in the previous directions was that ECD programmes were required to indicate

	<p>that they would attempt to register-the Children’s Act remains the only relevant legislation governing registration of an ECD programme and or partial care facility. ECD programmes do not have to make an undertaking to register within six months in order to operate</p>
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Discussions on the 11 September directions (implications and experiences in the ground):

True North:

True North is a Social Services Organisation (SSO) and they have had direction from DSD. They have done training on the SoPs, encourage practitioners to complete a readiness survey and informed them that True North would conduct verifications but that did not mean that they would have to wait for the verifications to reopen. As soon as ECD programmes have completed the readiness survey and they have their declaration up at the site, then they can reopen.

Thandeka:

The experience in some of the provinces, particularly Mpumalanga ECD CoP has been that the DSD and DBE had embarked on province wide verifications with the instruction that the ECD programmes cannot reopen until verifications had been conducted. The same was issue was reported by KZN ECD CoP members and this was leading to frustration for many of the ECD practitioners.

Kayin:

The difficult tasks that organisations such as SSOs face is assisting ECD programmes to reopen as safely as possible whilst at the same time trying to advocate for reasonable safety and health regulations that are not overly onerous. It also does seem that the reopening challenges have more prevalent in other provinces either than the WC. There is clearly work in terms of advocacy and in terms of communicating clearly what reopening safely means.

Grant:

Inclusive Education South Africa is a capacity building organisations with regards to inclusive education. With the lockdown, programmes have been adapted and facilitated online. The challenge identified is that principals and practitioners have struggled to understand what is required in terms of compliance for reopening. IESA has had to refer some of its centres to organisations like True North

Margaret:

Margaret heads up the Home Choice Development Trust and her experience as a funder, the process that the ECD programmes had to follow was not easy and working with NGOS and SSOs who broke down this complicated process has been beneficial for the trust and the centres it supports.

True North:

Since the WC is the only province that works with SSOs, C19 has shown how valuable this model is. In other provinces, it would seem government has been dictating whereas in the WC there has been a working relationship between the department and the SSOs. The requirement to commit to registering within 6 months was also unfair as this was more of a tick-box exercise from government’s side but not really developmental to ECD programmes because it was tied to receiving health and safety equipment.

Grant:

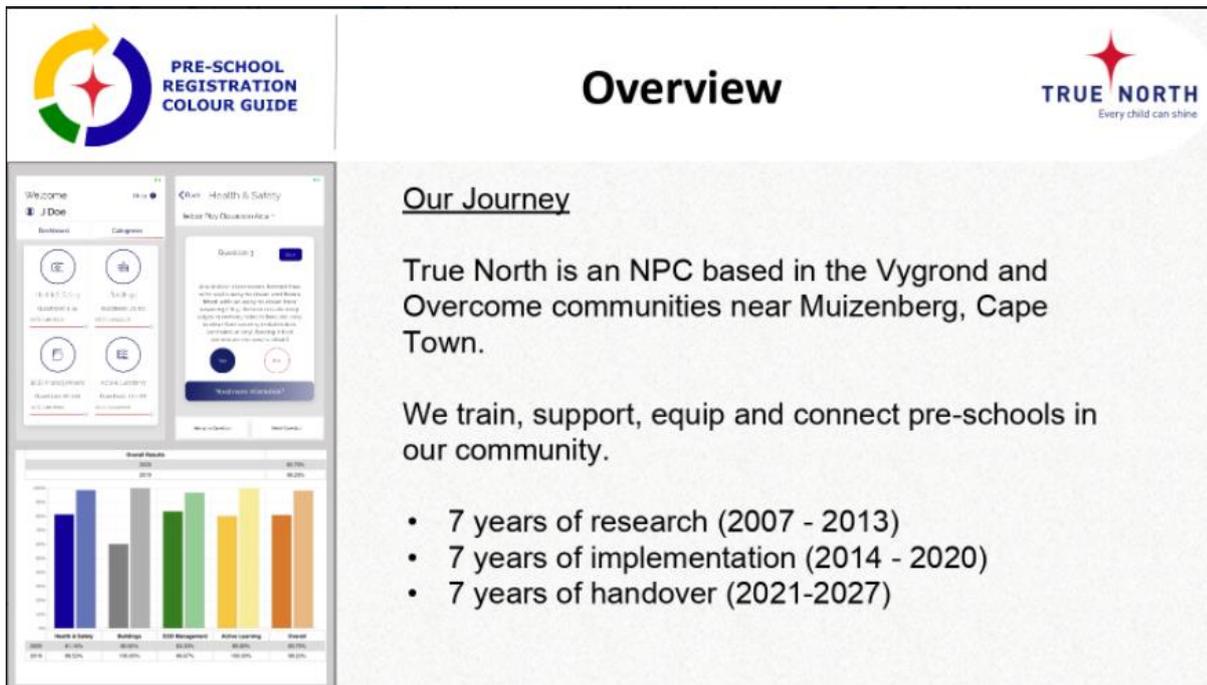
There is no disagreement that registration must happen because this will ensure health and safety for children but the DSD is setting the goalposts so far and the DSD does not have the capacity to bring unregistered sites to speed. This means that there is a reliance on SSOs however, without the prerequisite funding. SSOs are therefore forced to source funding from the private sector and there is no communication between the DSD and the funders to articulate the needs.

Resolutions:

Kayin posed the question whether it would worthwhile to put together a knowledge product (KP) on this particular matter. A KP would communicate, in an accessible way, the issues articulated in the presentation for the sector. This would help the reopening process that is a challenge to many in the sector. Lee added that it would be a good idea because after receiving the initial SoPs and directions, ECD programmes have possibly not been able to apply themselves to the recent directions. Xoliswa added that it would be good if something was communicated in simple language. Thandeka also added that this should ideally be communication that is coming from government and that the Intersectoral Forum (ISF) steercom should engage on this issue. The next steps agreed on:

- Communication to the National DSD via the ISF steercom
- Package communication on our own if we are unable to get a hold of the department

TRUE NORTH PRE-SCHOOL REGISTRATION COLOUR GUIDE (PRCG)APP:



Peter Hagen, who is the Infrastructure and Environment lead at True North gave the CoP a presentation on an app that assists pre-schools with registration and other developmental milestones. To access the full presentation, please click [here](#).

- True North is an SSO based in Vrygrond and Overcome communities near Muizenberg and the focus is on training, support and connecting pre-schools in the community.

- Pre-school registration falls under the Rainbow Development Framework (RDF) of the organisation which is intended to give a clear development plan for pre-schools to reach not just registration but sustainability and offering quality early learning
- The programme is intended to be replicable and scalable
- M&E Tools: the purpose is to map RDF and enable pre-schools to be able to support themselves and each other.
- Pre-School Registration Colour Guide (PSGC):
 - Covers 121 questions covering key areas required to register as a partial care facility
 - It is not a government tool and 100% does not mean registration-various certificates from officials must still be obtained
 - Intention is for pre-schools to lead relationships and data gathering- as they know where they stand in terms of legalities

Objectives of PSGC:

- Helps principals understand registration process so they can lead their own development journey
- No pressure for principals to answer everything immediately-they set timelines
- Set their own goals to keep motivated
- Tackle issues by colour band
- They have ability to share their reports with SSOs, ECD forums and donors

Functionality of the App:

- The app has questions that require YES, NO or N/A responses with the ability to return to where the principals left off
- Principals can select categories to work on
- The app generates reports behind the scene that chart progress year on year and reflect questions that still need work Reports can be shared with others
- Online and offline capabilities and small initial download
- Reports are categorised according to colour: blue, green and yellow and all these have a different focus including basic health and safety, governance and administration and lastly infrastructure respectively.

The app can be downloaded Apple App Store or Google Play store. More information and video demonstration on how to use the app can be accessed on <http://www.true-north.co.za/prcg/>

Questions, answers and comments:

What is the thinking around the role out into other communities?

There has been a launch where a number of SSOs were invited. There is uptake but there is still a way to go. The target is forums and NPOs. After this process, other strategies will be looked at?

It would be great to start mapping the electronic media that exists and what the purposes are so we can track the technology that is within the sector.

UPDATE FROM THE NATIONAL ECD COP: ECD AND THE LAW

Thandeka gave a brief overview of the National ECD CoP that focused on 'ECD and the law'. The intention of the CoP was to allow members to:

- interact with the law in order to understand it and how it affects their work;
- understand processes and mechanisms available to the ECD sector in influencing the law to better serve them and;
- strengthen and advance active citizenship within the sector

Lizette Berry from the Children’s Institute presented on the Children’s Act sighting the historical issues that the Act has presented to the sector and Nurina Ally provided a presentation on the present Children’s Amendment Bill (B18-2020). The bill is undergoing due processes before it is enacted but does have potentially detrimental implications for the sector, the Bill is up for public comment until 27th November 2020. Tess Peacock then spoke to the **Real Reform for ECD In South Africa Campaign** which is a campaign that aims to advocate for real change within the sector by advocating for five reforms that can significantly change the ECD sector. To access the full details, the meeting highlights of the National ECD CoP are captured [here](#).

The real reform for ECD campaign comes at an opportune time where the sector can be galvanised behind this legal process for the benefit of those who work in the sector and the children that are served. People can get behind this campaign by signing a petition, providing a submission to the portfolio committee and by adding your name to the campaign. More information can be found on this website: ecdreform.org.za. the five reforms include:

- **We need a one-step registration process for ECD providers and different types of ECD providers must be regulated differently.**
- **All children attending any type of ECD programme should be able to access the early learning subsidy if they need it.**
- **Simpler, adequate health and safety standards must be in place and must be accessed through one process.**
- **It must be made clear that you can get conditional registration when you can’t meet all the registration requirements and MEC’s must support providers to meet requirements and report on their systems of support.**
- **The infrastructure needs of the sector must be supported.**

PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR

The Western Cape CoP plans to convene 4 times during 2021. In attempt to keep the CoP member centric, members were asked to forward topic suggestions to Kauthar@Bridge.org.za. The proposed 2021 dates for the CoP are 21 January, 22 April, 22 July and 22 October.